

# Stories of Pioneer Days in the West

By T. A. McNEAL

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## The Discomfited Hypnotist

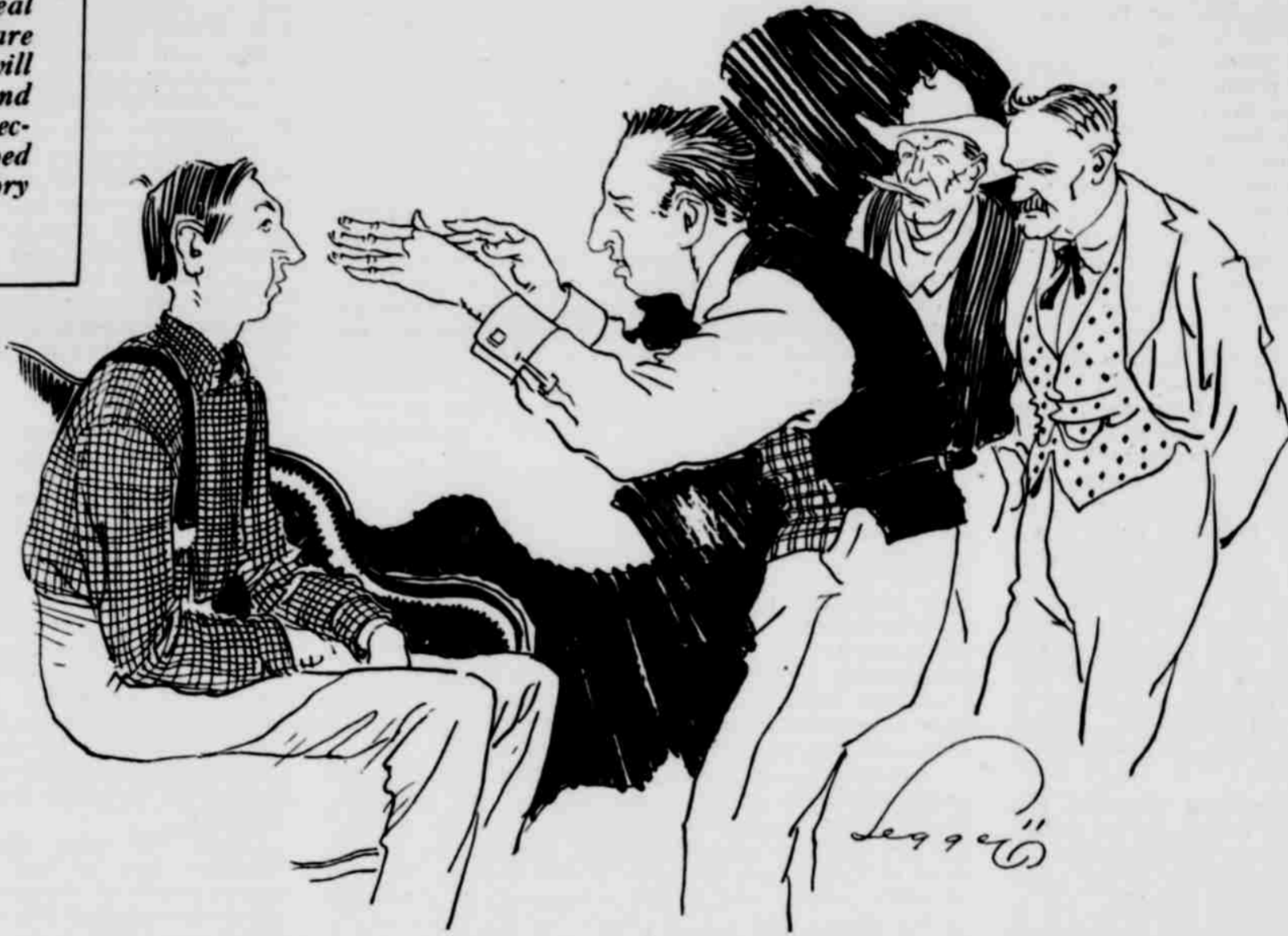
**THE** pioneer days for America are about at an end. Among the pioneers were characters that stand in a class all by themselves. In this series, dealing with pioneers in the United States, in Canada and in Alaska, are recorded the lives and deeds of real characters, giving real names when names are given. This series will leave for present and future generations a record of men who helped make the early history of the country.

**A**LONG in the middle of the eighties Medicine Lodge, Kansas, grew ambitious to have a hotel that would be a credit to the town. The railroad was building in and the expectation was that there would be a boom. A stock company was organized and a three-story brick hotel was erected that was regarded with pride by the inhabitants. Among the landlords that ran the hotel during the next few years was one Mortimer Strong, commonly known as Mort Strong.

Mort's idea of running a hotel was not to let a guest take any more money away than could be helped. If he had more "mazuma" than was necessary to pay for his food and lodging, if he had any sporting tendency, and most travelers in that part of Kansas at that time did have more or less sporting tendencies, he was inveigled into a game of draw poker, and as the game was put up against him, his skin was removed with deftness, but not necessarily with dispatch. It was not always to the interest of the hotel to separate the guest from his coin at the first sitting. That sort of abrupt procedure was liable to discourage the guest and arouse suspicions in his mind; besides if the sessions about the card table could be prolonged for two or three evenings, the hotel bill increased in proportion. Mort was not the kind of person to conceal from his right hand what his left hand was doing. Suffice it to say that the stranger within the gates who stopped at the Grand Hotel rarely got away until he had been skinned in a workmanlike and thorough manner.

Mort Strong was a versatile soul who enjoyed a practical joke almost as well as he enjoyed putting up a hand in a poker game. I might say here that Mortimer also ran a hotel in Medicine Lodge before the Grand was built. I am not entirely positive whether the incident about to be related occurred in the old hotel or the new, but think it was in the new. The Kansas City Star at that time had a descendant of Abraham as its subscription solicitor in Southwest Kansas and in the course of his travels the young Jew landed at Medicine Lodge.

He was unfamiliar with the ways of the border and full of conversation. It was not long before Mort Strong and the loafers who congregated about the hotel



discovered that here was a most promising subject for contribution to their joy of life. The stranger happened to remark that he was interested in the subject of hypnotism and had studied and practiced it to a considerable extent. Immediately the crowd was interested. Some of them scoffed at the possibility that the Star representative was able to hypnotize anybody, but others warmly championed him. The conversation grew personal and bitter but it was finally proposed to settle the question by having the Israelite try his powers on a subject. He was willing but said of course he wasn't a professional and maybe couldn't put the subject under the influence of the hypnotic spell but was willing to try. The subject was found in the son of the hotel keeper, Mort Strong. Frank Strong was a man grown, a large, stalwart man. He expressed doubt about the ability of any Jew to put him to sleep but was willing to let him try.

Before the experiment commenced young Strong put something in his mouth which when chewed gently and mingled with saliva would create a sort of lather. The Jew commenced to make passes at young Strong and talk to him in a commanding, and at the same time, soothing tone of voice: "You vas goin' to schleep now." "Go to schleep. Go to schleep!"

The experiment was satisfactory beyond the hypnotist's most sanguine expectations. Young Strong's eyes closed. He fell back on the couch and seemed to be wrapped in profound slumber. The Jew was delighted. "You see, gentlemen, he vas schleepin' shust like a leedle babe," he said. Just then something happened he had not counted on. Young Strong began to foam

at the mouth. The elder Strong at once became apprehensive. "What's the matter with him, young fellow?" he yelled at the frightened Jew. "Get him from under this hypnotic spell of yours and get him out of it quick or there will be something doing, believe me."

The traveler began frantically to make passes at the apparently unconscious man and call on him to "wake up," but the more he worked the more young Strong foamed at the mouth. The fury of Mort Strong grew apace. He was restrained from making a bodily attack on the amateur hypnotist only by the combined efforts of several of the loafers, who begged of him not to kill the "hypnotist" because nobody else around there would have any idea how the young man could be brought out of the trance. Meantime the consternation of the Jew increased. Great drops of sweat stood out on his forehead, as he called pleadingly but with no effect for young Strong to "wake up." Apparently the condition of the sleeping man was growing worse. His breathing became labored and the foam from his mouth flecked his lips and ran from the corners of his mouth. It was well along in the evening, near bedtime, when the excitement was undertaken; by midnight the excitement had reached fever heat. Mort Strong was heaping imprecations on the young Israelite and declaring that unless his boy was brought out of the trance he would kill the man who had put him under the spell.

Finally he declared he wouldn't stand it any longer and swearing vengeance he rushed out of the room. "Mort has gone for his gun!" whispered one of the loafers who had exerted himself to save the young man from assault at the hands of the grief-crazed father.

"If you are here when he comes back I can't save you. You had better make your get-away now. Head south for Kiowa. I will try to keep him from following you. There is a train leaves Kiowa early in the morning. It's not quite twenty miles from here. If you hit the grit fast enough you ought to be able to make it before that train pulls out."

It seemed to be good advice. The young man grabbed his hat and coat and faded rapidly into the night, heading for Kiowa twenty miles away.

It was a sore-footed and wearied man who limped into the Kiowa depot at an early hour the next morning, but he was reasonably happy, for he hadn't been followed and he had caught the train.

## Why Print Paper and Lumber Are High

TO THE EDITOR: The Billings (Montana) Star of January 17, contains a reprint from THE DEARBORN INDEPENDENT in which Mr. Thomas B. Drayton pictures Conservation as a blow to Alaska. The same issue of the Star also prints a letter from Mr. Gifford Pinchot, the "Evil Genius" of Mr. Drayton who suggested Alaskan Conservation, pleading for protection of forests, as he has done for a score of years since he first started to tell us that in fifteen years or so our timber supply would be exhausted.

As, no doubt, the same letter was sent to and printed in other publications all over the country and as anything which suggests a better forest management and consequent lower prices for forest products will be eagerly swallowed by the uninitiated, it appears to be a public service to examine closely into the merits or demerits of Mr. Pinchot's plea.

Considering it in its generalities and superficially, few would question its author's desire to render a real service to the American people. However, one short sentence in Mr. Pinchot's plea demonstrates clearly, at least to those who have a personal acquaintance with conditions existing in our forests, that our, or rather Mr. Pinchot's policy of forest conservation, has been a failure in the past and has only helped the lumber trust to filch more dollars from the pockets of consumers of

forest products. Mr. Pinchot states: "Four-fifths of our remaining timber is privately owned, and private commercial timber lands furnished 97 per cent of our annual timber cut."

Mark! Our national and state forests, with the control of one-fifth of the available supply, furnished at best only three per cent of the consumption, while under the rule of ordinary mathematics they should supply twenty per cent. It is the holding back from the market of this seventeen per cent of timber, which, by the way, is destroyed beyond recovery through insects and decay on account of overmaturity, which has raised the cost of all forest products to its present high level and which will keep it there.

Almost all the forest reservations of the West contain extensive areas stocked with timber which was mature a half century or more ago, but that timber is deliberately withheld from the market until the lumber trust is ready to purchase it, though the yield of sound lumber is bound to be less as the years go by on account of decay. Should Mr. Pinchot or anyone else take objection to what I have stated in this respect, I am ready at any time to substantiate what I claim and moreover, that this policy of adding to the waste of forest products for the benefit of the lumber trust was accepted and put into effective execution before 1910,

when Mr. Pinchot was chief forester and when he could easily have put an end to this most deplorable state of affairs in the national forests.

As withdrawing from circulation twenty dollars out of every hundred would make a tight money market and raise interest rates, so withdrawal of nearly one-fifth of the timber supply from the lumber market has raised the cost of forest products, and in the face of what experience has shown in this regard, Mr. Pinchot pleads now for national control of privately-owned, commercial timber tracts which would still further curtail the supply. If the future has to have more timber, make it obligatory to owners of commercial timber tracts to reforest what is being denuded, but to national control with the object to regulate cutting and incidentally to enhance waste of perfectly good timber, as is being done now in national forests, every user of forest products should register a decided "No," unless he has a specific interest in the lumber trust, for, as Alaskan Conservation only benefited the already solidly-intrenched Guggenheim interests, so conservation of our national forest resources, as practiced, has been and is only benefiting the lumber trust at the consumers' expense.

JOSEF BRUNNER,  
Goodview, Va.